

of our less common species and particularly given that so many Australian species still remain to be described.

Dr Hawkeswood's book aids rapid identification of common spiders likely to be encountered in bushland or home gardens in southern Australian cities. It is a welcome addition to the casual naturalist's library, and well suited to laypersons wishing to get to know the local species and learn of their habits as a recreational pursuit. As a registered teacher of biology, I can recommend it as a useful resource for school and public libraries in that it provides general information in a readily accessible form, being particularly useful for school projects. For school children, the glossy presentation, large plates, easy-to-read style and clear structural diagrams of spider external anatomy will be a major attraction and provide foundational knowl-

edge prior to inquisitive hunting, garden observation and cautious collection. Having also worked professionally in both entomology and arachnology, I remain hopeful that young readers may be stimulated to learn more about the ecology of the Australian spider fauna. Nature books read during my childhood fuelled my own biogeographical interests, so I'm sure Dr Hawkeswood's handy book will similarly pique the curiosity of many young readers whose developing interests gravitate towards spiders or other arthropods such as insects. And, through such interest some may progress to professional roles in biological or species diversity research.

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Rhythms of the Tarkine: a natural history adventure

Book by Sarah Lloyd; CD by Ron Nagorcka

Publisher: Sarah Lloyd, Birralee, Tasmania 7303. Book and CD in slipcase. 2004. Book 98 pages, paperback; colour photographs; black and white drawings. CD duration 74 minutes. ISBN 0-646-44118-3. RRP \$35.00

Between the Arthur and Pieman Rivers in north-western Tasmania lies the largest tract of unprotected wilderness in the State. This region, covering an area of some 447 000 ha, was named the Tarkine in honour of the Tarkiner people who lived in the area until British settlement. The Tarkine comprises a variety of vegetation communities – buttongrass plains, coastal heaths, the largest cool temperate rainforest in Australia, and eucalypt forests – which are home to 56 threatened and endangered species. It also contains the greatest concentration of Aboriginal sites (240+, including remnants of villages) in Australia. In short, this area is one of the world's great treasures, but is under threat



from the forestry and mining industries. The campaign to protect it has been running for over 20 years, but considerable damage has already occurred. At present 73 000 ha are protected from logging, but not from mining.

Sarah Lloyd and Ron Nagorcka have explored 11 sites in the area (shown on the map at the front of the book), and have recorded their experiences and observations in words, pictures and sounds. They communicate clearly not only their passion for the beauty and complexity of this descendant from the primeval forests of the ancient supercontinent, Gondwana, but also a strong sense of what a great loss its destruction would be. The text is beautifully written, containing a wealth of interest-

ing and carefully researched information. With a keen eye for detail, Sarah paints a vivid picture of the scenery, vegetation and wildlife, as well as the history of settlements in the area, such as Balfour and Guildford. In just a few words she brings to life some of the early explorers – Henry Hellyer and James ‘Philosopher’ Smith, for example. The text is enhanced by colour images of animals, plants and fungi contributed by several photographers, including Sarah, and also by Nicholas Sheehy’s monochrome drawings of birds and insects. The main text is followed by details of the 99 CD tracks, a table of fauna sightings, and an index of flora and fauna with the scientific names printed next to the common names. Tracks on the CD are numbered and highlighted throughout the text.

The CD features 89 tracks of high quality recordings of animal sounds—mainly bird-song, but also calls of insects, frogs and the Tasmanian Devil—interspersed with ten of Ron’s innovative musical compositions

based on these sounds. To the untrained ear the music may seem strange at first, but appreciation grows with repeated listening. Six musicians, including Ron, perform the compositions on various instruments. Wilderness areas such as the Tarkine, where, to quote Bob Brown, ‘one is imbued with the awe of being part of nature’s continuum’, are always a source of inspiration, whether for photographers, writers, artists, musicians, botanists, zoologists or anyone who just enjoys the experience of being there. One of my favourite tracks on the CD is the recording of the exquisite ascending call of the Ground Parrot, accompanied by the distant roar of the mighty Southern Ocean. Atmospheric indeed.

This publication should appeal to anyone with an interest in natural history. Needless to say, a visit to the Tarkine is now at the top of my ‘must do’ list.

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The Gilded Canopy Botanical Ceiling Panels of the Natural History Museum

by Sandra Knapp and Bob Press

Publisher: *Natural History Museum, London, 2005. 168 pages, hardback; colour photographs. ISBN 0565091980. RRP \$49.95*

This attractive little book documents the decorative botanical panels that adorn the ceilings of the Central Hall, Landing and North Hall of Natural History Museum, London.

The founding Director, Richard Owen, conceived the Museum as being a ‘cathedral to nature’ where learning and discovery about the natural world were paramount and where national pride in the British Empire could be celebrated. His vision is reflected in the Museum’s neo-Romanesque design by architect Alfred Waterhouse.

Waterhouse envisaged a grand central hall, or ‘nave’, where Owen’s directive for an ‘Index Museum’, a comprehensive introduction to the order of nature, could be realised. Smaller, more specialised

